

I extend my deepest congratulations to City-wide Banks for this well-deserved honor from the West Chamber of Commerce.

HONORING THE LIFE OF  
CONGRESSMAN ROBERT GARCIA

**HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN**

OF PUERTO RICO  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 2017*

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as Puerto Rico's sole elected representative in Congress to speak about a great man who gave up his voting rights in order to live and die in the place he loved so much, my Puerto Rico.

Former Congressman Robert "Bob" Garcia devoted his life to helping our nation become more open and diverse. Before 1990, being Hispanic was not even a classification in the census. Thanks to him, from 1990 on, Hispanics are now counted. Thanks to him, we now know that there are nearly 60 million Hispanics in America, over 50 million in the 50 states and over 3.4 million in Puerto Rico and the rest of our territories.

Thanks to Bob Garcia, the early divisions between African-Americans and Hispanics began to heal. Thanks to his solidarity, our nation now devotes a federal holiday to honor the most important African-American in our nation's history, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Thanks to Bob Garcia and his fellow Congressman Jack Kemp, a Republican, their good idea of creating Enterprise Zones, where poverty is fought through job creation and not through handouts, became a reality. Today I stand for the expansion of this program.

Like hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans, Bob Garcia served in the United States Army, in his particular case during the Korean War as a radio operator with the Third Infantry Division. Yet, like his fellow veterans on the Island, his right to vote for the President and a full-fledged delegation in the U.S. Congress was taken away the minute he moved to Puerto Rico.

On a lighter note, every time I spoke to him, he would remind me that, since his first election to Congress in 1978, he had never voted for a Republican, that is, until he voted for me, a Republican woman, to represent him as a non-voting delegate in this House.

I am honored that for three weeks, Bob was my constituent. He and his wife Jane moved a few years ago to Puerto Rico, knowing that in so doing, they, like the other 3.4 million U.S. citizens residing on the Island, would become disenfranchised. Last November, they couldn't vote for the President, U.S. senators or voting members of Congress, but they chose me to be Puerto Rico's sole elected voice in this chamber. Bob empowered me to fight to give him back his voting rights, not through relocation to the states, but in the Puerto Rico he chose to live the last days of his long, fruitful and accomplished life.

Twelve days ago, while lying in state in the territorial Capitol building, Bob Garcia was honored by the people of Puerto Rico. Today, I join my fellow members in honoring a friend and mentor who left his mark in this body and in the history of a nation. May God bless Congressman Bob Garcia and his legacy.

RECOGNIZING HOME DEPOT STORE  
1234 FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO  
SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM IN  
THE CITY OF BUFFALO

**HON. BRIAN HIGGINS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 2017*

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the managers and employees of Home Depot Store 1234, who have consistently gone out of their way to support and restore a clean and safe community in Buffalo, New York. Their service and work with community leaders is recognized today by None Like You/We Care Outreach and the City of Buffalo.

Employees from the Service Desk, Pro Desk and the Garden, Paint and Plumbing departments have been instrumental in helping to restore several houses on Southampton Street and other areas in the Eastside and Westside of the City of Buffalo. They have given paint for inside and outside house projects for over 30 years and have also been a tremendous help in providing flowers, shrubs, bushes, top soil and mulch for the past several years. These materials have gone to help community gardens, and the properties of seniors, disabled residents and families who could not otherwise afford it.

During the Christmas season, Home Depot Store 1234 has supplied None Like You/We Care Outreach and St. Luke's Mission of Mercy with fresh cut Christmas trees for families in need.

Mr. Speaker, I honor Home Depot Store 1234 and their admirable dedication to the City of Buffalo. Home Depot and its employees have made many dreams come true for the citizens of our community and certainly deserve this recognition by None Like You/We Care Outreach and the City of Buffalo.

BOOSTING RATES OF AMERICAN  
VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, February 13, 2017*

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of H.R. 974, the Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment (BRAVE) Act.

There is no question that post-9/11 veterans face a harsher economic reality than other Americans. Although in recent years the unemployment rate of post-9/11 veterans decreased since the double digit highs of 2011, the veteran unemployment rate among veterans remains higher than the national average. Those who have sacrificed most for our nation are often left behind or forgotten by businesses and employers when they return home. The transition from military to civilian life is a challenging one for many veterans, and we must address the harsh realities our veterans face when they attempt to reintegrate into the economy.

As we consider the best ways to boost veteran employment in the 115th Congress, we must concentrate our efforts on what many

major veterans organizations are urging us to do. The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars have all argued that the Department of Veterans Affairs, when granting contracts, should give preference to businesses that employ a high concentration of veterans on a full-time basis. This is a common-sense proposal.

Each year the Department of Veterans Affairs contracts tens of billions of taxpayer dollars on various goods and services. H.R. 974 would ensure that when awarding a contract for goods or services, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs give preference to businesses that employ full-time a high percentage of veterans. H.R. 974 would also grant the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the power to debar for five years from contracting with the Department those offerors who willfully misrepresent the veteran status of their employees. This discourages potential businesses from over-reporting the percentage of veterans that make up their workforce.

I believe that H.R. 974 would also have a ripple effect across other agencies in the government and ultimately help a countless number of veterans attain full-time employment. Today, there are an estimated 24,000 businesses that work on federal contracts and employ about 28 million workers in the process. In FY 2015, in my home state of Georgia, an estimated 50,000 workers were employed by Department of Defense contracts alone. In my opinion, H.R. 974 would spark other federal agencies to adopt similar provisions that would give preference to businesses that employ large concentrations of veterans on a full-time basis.

I ask that my colleagues support this bill.

THE RETIREMENT OF MS. KAREN  
SPAR AFTER A 37-YEAR CAREER  
OF SERVICE AT THE CONGRES-  
SIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE  
(CRS)

**HON. KEVIN BRADY**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 2017*

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my congratulations and best wishes to Ms. Karen Spar on the occasion of her retirement from a lifetime of dedicated service at the Congressional Research Service. Since she began her career in 1980 at CRS, Karen has risen from an analyst to the head of the Children and Families Section and eventually the Division of Social Policy's first Division Research Coordinator.

In her early days as an analyst, Karen worked on major legislative initiatives of American social policy, including the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, the Job Training Partnership Act of 1983, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, and the Adoption and Safe Family Act of 1997.

As head of the Children and Families Section, she supervised work in many of these same policy areas, including income support, child care, nutrition assistance, housing, child welfare, vulnerable youth, child support enforcement, poverty, and others. Her leadership efforts shaped a disparate group of policy areas and analysts from different backgrounds. They became a coherent and highly